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# OPINION

## My Tea Party 'Taliban' Comment

### Racists don't like being called out

BY JULIAN BOND

I have always suspected that racists didn't like being called out for their racism. Now I have proof.

When I told MSNBC's Thomas Roberts that the Tea Party was "the Taliban wing of American politics," a firestorm erupted.

Arguing the IRS was correct to target them for extra scrutiny, I also said, "Here are a group of people who are admittedly racist, who are overtly political" and therefore worthy of IRS concern.

I was not prepared for the slew of angry emails, including two from self-identified black people (your worst nightmare, one said) I received.

Many of them suggested I leave the country, reminiscent of the "Go back to Africa" chants racist crowds of whites shouted at black protesters in my youth.



One said my advanced age - I am 73 - meant I would not be around to make such mischief much longer, and I should prepare for that quick eventuality.

A few suggested my employer fire me, not knowing that I retired from that job a year ago. Several of the messages

were badly written with misspelled words, including one from a relative by marriage -- you can't choose your in-laws -- reading "Your calling folks Talabans borders on traitorism."

This same correspondent noted I had been "head of the most classic racist group in our country," referring to the NAACP, whose board I chaired for 11 years. Others characterized the NAACP, the nation's oldest civil rights group, interracial in membership and dedicated to racial integration since 1909, in the same way.

After an exchange of messages with some of them, trying to convince them that while I opposed it,

I didn't condemn every member of the Tea Party, the interactions became more civil and less hostile. Some even wished me well.

But to a person they rejected the labels "racism" and "racist," even as I thought I had proved that the Tea Party has had racist, anti-Semitic and nativist elements from its beginning until today.

One source is a study conducted for the NAACP by the Institute for Research and Education for Human Rights.

Their study, called "Tea Party Nationalism," found "Tea Party ranks to be permeated with concerns about race and national identity and other so-called social issues. In these ranks, an abiding obsession with Barack Obama's birth certificate is often a stand-in for the belief that the first black president of the United States is not a "real American."

It says Tea Party organizations have given platforms to anti-Semites, racists and bigots and "hard-core white nationalists have been attracted" to Tea Party protests.

The link between the Tea Party and the Taliban was made by a prominent Republican office holder.

In 2008, the Washington Post reported that former Chairman of the Republican Congressional Committee and present day Congressman Pete Sessions likened the GOP House minority to the Taliban, saying, "Insurgency, we understand perhaps a bit more because of the Taliban."

Just as my arguments failed to convince my correspondents, so apparently does the actual evidence: Not the ugly racist signs and placards displayed at Tea Party rallies, not the shouts of the "n" word aimed at members of the Congressional Black Caucus, not the spittle hurled at civil rights icon and Congressman John Lewis, not the racists expelled from the Tea Party for their venom, not the association of many members with the Council of Conservative Citizens, a lineal descendant of the White Citizen Council, not the anti-gay slurs aimed at former Congressman Barney Frank, not the members whose racism, anti-

Semitism and xenophobia should be an embarrassment -- not all or any of this could get them to acknowledge the label "racist."

My black correspondents even claimed that their race prohibited them from being racists, as if skin color was a proscript against ignorance. And many of my presumably non-black correspondents accused me of being a racist, so my race apparently offered me no protection from this evil.

What is the lesson here? That the label "racist" has become so toxic that almost everyone rejects it? That the toxicity makes the label unacceptable but its actual practice is still tolerable for many? Or that it is a defense against itself?

As the relative-I-try-not-to-claim wrote, "I don't know any white people who hate blacks like you advocate blacks should hate whites." Or only that while the United States has made much progress in race relations, we still have a long, long way to go?

Julian Bond is chairman emeritus of the NAACP.

## Unemployment Biggest Crisis in America

### Jobs needed to rebuild America

BY MARC MORIAL

If you've been watching the news, you've probably noticed there's no shortage of scandals or manufactured crises coming out of Washington these days.

But the biggest crisis of all -- the epidemic of double-digit unemployment and the huge gulf of economic disparities that continue to plague millions of Americans -- seems to be attracting little attention.

The National Urban League is shifting the nation's focus back to the jobs crisis, not by reciting gloomy and well-worn statistics, but by putting a comprehensive solution on the table.



Last week in Cleveland, the National Urban League launched one of the most ambitious economic rescue missions in our history. "Jobs Rebuild America: Educate, Employ, Empower" is a \$100 million public-private-nonprofit partnership aimed at putting America back to work and targeting communities where help is needed most.

Using a comprehensive community development approach to the nation's employment and education crises, this initiative brings together federal, corporate and non-profit resources to create economic opportunity in 50 U.S. cities through the Urban League affiliate network.

The program consists of both community investments and grassroots legislative advocacy. The campaign's five-year, \$100 million community investment component includes job training for youth and mature workers, college prepara-

tion, a jobs network, entrepreneurship support, small business financing and resources, and tax credits.

The campaign's grassroots advocacy component will focus on federal legislative action in support of a balanced and responsible fiscal plan as well as backing for efforts that spur job creation in hard-pressed urban communities.

This includes our long-standing support for the passage of the Urban Jobs Act, co-sponsored by Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand and Congressman Chaka Fattah, and for the Project Ready STEM Act, sponsored by Congresswoman Marcia Fudge.

We stood with acting Secretary of the U.S. Department of Labor Seth Harris, Cleveland Mayor Frank G. Jackson, Cuyahoga County Executive Edward FitzGerald and Urban League of Greater Cleveland President Marsha Mockabee to kick-off the Jobs Rebuild America

campaign.

As a designated Jobs Rebuild America market, the Urban League of Greater Cleveland received \$950,000 in community investment competitive grants for three signature National Urban League programs -- the Urban Youth Empowerment Program, the Entrepreneurship Center program and Project Ready: Post Secondary Success Program.

This funding will help the affiliate expand existing programs and introduce new ones to better serve the needs of the local community, including the design of a new 21st Century workforce development system to reach thousands of job seekers, while targeting some of the most vulnerable unemployed.

Since the start of the Great Recession, Urban League affiliates across the nation have served as economic first responders for communities devastated by job loss.

For the Jobs Rebuild America campaign, we have put together an expanded coalition of public and private partners who have pledged their expertise and resources. They include the U.S. Departments of Labor, Justice and Treasury and more than 20 major corporations.

As America faces the lowest labor force participation rate in almost 35 years and unacceptably high urban unemployment, creating jobs and economically viable communities must involve all of us working together, including the government, corporate and non-profit sectors.

It's time to shift from the debate about the problem of unemployment to taking concrete action to solve it. National Urban League affiliates and our Jobs Rebuild America coalition are primed to do just that.

Marc Morial is president and chief executive officer of the National Urban League.

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